

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

071805Z Jun 05

ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	DS-00	EAP-00	EB-00	EUR-00	UTED-00	H-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	M-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OIC-00	PA-00	MCC-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00	P-00
	SP-00	IRM-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	FMP-00	SCRS-00	DSCC-00
	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	SWCI-00	/001W

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FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1740  
INFO AMEMBASSY ABUJA  
AMEMBASSY ACCRA  
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO  
AMEMBASSY KAMPALA  
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

UNCLAS NDJAMENA 000902

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF, AF/C, INR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [CD](#)

SUBJECT: LIFTING TERM LIMITS: LOW TURN-OUT FOR PUBLIC  
REFERENDUM

REF: A. NDJAMENA 863

[1](#)B. NDJAMENA 887

[1](#)1. Summary: Low voter turn-out characterized the public referendum on constitutional amendments, including one that removes presidential term limits, on June 6. The low turn-out is the result of several factors, including apathy, the declaration of a public holiday, and opposition calls for a boycott. N'Djamena was calm and quiet as teams of Embassy employees monitored over 120 polling stations and witnessed irregularities at many of the polling places. Similar reports of low voter turn-out were received from contacts in Abeche, Moundou, and Moussoro. The government newspaper, Le Progres, however, claims that 60 percent of the eligible voters voted by 11:00 a.m. The ruling party is claiming victory for its "oui massif" campaign. The final tally will be released June 21. End Summary.

[1](#)2. Embassy employees visited over 120 polling stations throughout N'Djamena, used a series of contacts in other parts of Chad, and travel to Moussoro, to observe the conduct of the public referendum on June 6. N'Djamena was quiet as the government declared a public holiday and the opposition declared a stay-at-home boycott for the "death of democracy".

Embassy teams noted a low voter turn-out. Each polling station had approximately 400 registered voters, but embassy officials noted only 30-40 votes per station early in the day. However, teams conducted spot checks of stations near closing and confirmed that turn-out had not increased. At some stations, the most votes recorded were from nomads, who were given three days to vote.

[1](#)3. Despite some complaints of material shortages, Embassy personnel found that most polling stations had sufficient supplies (yes and no ballots, ink, electoral lists). National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) officials appeared to understand their task, and the polling stations were orderly. However, the presence of ruling Movement for Patriotic Salvation (MPS) officials at the polling stations and the fact that the local neighborhood chief, who are also MPS members, possessed the keys to the ballot boxes were key irregularities. Gendarmes, police, and nomadic guard members were posted at each polling station, but were unarmed and appeared not to be intimidating voters, from our observations. There were some problems with the voter registration lists.

[1](#)4. We note that on June 5, the ruling party rented a plane that flew over N'Djamena dropping "oui" ballots which are white in various neighborhoods. In addition, a procession in support of the "yes" vote also dropped "oui" ballots out of cars. Campaign posters for the "yes" vote, which should have been taken down prior to the voting, still adorn the streets. Some polling stations were located near MPS offices. Two Embassy officers witnessed gendarmes voting "yes" several times at several polling stations.

[1](#)5. Each voter was given a "yes" and "no" ballot and an

envelope. The voter then went behind a thatched mat or curtains to place their vote in an opaque envelope. They discarded the unused "yes" or "no" in a sack. Embassy personnel checked the sacks of discarded ballots and found that many voters had voted "no". (Note: However, we doubt the final results will reflect this. End Note.) In some areas, there was no privacy. In one case, the polling officials challenged a "no" voter, asking the voter why they did not vote "yes".

16. The government newspaper and radio broadcasts are indicating a higher turn-out (perhaps as high as 60 percent, according to Le Progres) than we witnessed. The newspaper also quotes the French and Taiwanese Ambassadors as supporting President Deby. The results will not be announced until June 21.

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COMMENT  
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17. For all of the campaigning that went on prior to the referendum (refs), the government will be hard-pressed to explain the total lack of interest in the referendum.

Government statements that as many as 60 percent of the registered voters voted are a huge distortion. Given the level of government campaigning prior to the referendum, the low turn-out, which must have also included ruling party members, is disappointing for those who would want to claim that there is overwhelming support for President Deby to run for another term. We doubt that official tabulations mesh with our observations and expect a great deal of government "spin" on the referendum and its outcome.

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